

Methods for Training New Recruits in the Euclid Fire Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

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2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

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ABSTRACT

The problem this study investigated was the lack of consistent, realistic, and documented training for new recruits during their two year probationary period with the Euclid Fire Department.

The purpose of this study was to identify and provide recommendations for improved methods of training new recruits during their two year probationary period in the Euclid Fire Department. A descriptive research method was applied to this research project to answer the following research questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to be acquired by new recruits during their two year probationary period?
2. What types of training techniques were available and which ones should be adopted by the Euclid Fire Department?
3. How did other fire departments and organizations document the training of new employees?

The procedures used to complete this research included a review of written materials regarding the orienting and training of new employees. A survey was developed to determine how other fire departments and organizations orient and train newly hired employees.

The results indicated that the Euclid Fire Department needs to implement a training program that provides and documents realistic and consistent training for newly hired recruits.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

How does an organization orientate and train new recruits to ensure that they obtain the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) that are required to perform their jobs safely, effectively, and efficiently? *The problem this study addressed was the lack of consistent, realistic, and documented training for new recruits during their two year probationary period.*

Beginning a new career in any organization can be a challenging endeavor. Individuals may experience a gambit of emotions including excitement for the new challenges, fear of the unknown, and confusion as they begin their new career. The Euclid Fire Department typically holds a ceremony in which a new recruit is sworn in to the position of probationary firefighter. At this point, the new recruit is assigned to a 40 hour training week with the department training officer for orientation. The Euclid Fire Department does not have a formal orientation program for new recruits. The training officer determines the agenda for the orientation. Department records indicate that there have been seven different training officers from 1990 to the present. This has caused the content of the orientation to be inconsistent. Furthermore, the material being presented is not documented. Some hand written notes have been located, but the practices also are not consistent.

Upon completion of the 40 hour training week, the new recruit is assigned to a platoon. The platoons are designated A, B, and C and consist of a 24 hour work day followed by 48 hours off duty. The new recruit has a probationary period of two years. Once designated a platoon, the new recruit will be assigned to work at a station with five other members including a company officer. The company officer is the direct supervisor for the new recruit, however, the training provided by the company officer varies and is inconsistent. The company officer does not have a

guideline to follow so he or she conducts training and presents information that they feel is most important.

These new recruits are mentored by current department members that may also be deficient in the knowledge and skills that are necessary to be taught. Observed performance at company level training evolutions indicates that new recruits are not familiar with the use of departmental tools and equipment. New recruits have been observed not being able to start power tools and are not familiar with correct fueling procedures. They have been observed experiencing difficulty locating street addresses as well as target hazards located within the city. As a result, new recruits are completing their two year probationary period without obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to perform their jobs safely, effectively, and efficiently.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and provide recommendations for improved methods of training new recruits during their two year probationary period in the Euclid Fire Department. The information was gathered through descriptive research and a survey. The information and findings could be implemented into a new recruit training program to ensure that the training is consistent, realistic, and documented.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered by this descriptive research:

1. *What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to be acquired by new recruits during their two year probationary period?*
2. *What types of training techniques were available and which ones should be adopted by the Euclid Fire Department?*
3. *How did other fire departments and organizations document the training of new employees?*

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Euclid Fire Department consists of three fire stations and has experienced a changeover in personnel during the last 18 years. Department records indicate that the number of personnel working for the department in 1990 totaled 100 members. Since that time, 59 new members have been sworn into the department. The number of sworn personnel working for the department currently totals 80 members as budget cutbacks have caused a number of positions left vacant by retirements not to be filled.

Information obtained from new recruits' applications and resumes indicates their backgrounds are completely different than those that were hired in the past. These recruits have the minimum required training to be hired and for many this is their first "real" job. Many new hires do not reside in the local area and are not familiar with the city. Results from street map quizzes reveal that new recruits are having difficulty with the location of streets city-wide. The regularity at which these street map quizzes are administered and recorded is not consistent. It has been discovered while conducting company inspections, an activity in which the first-due company inspects buildings for fire code violations, that new recruits are not familiar with these buildings and their floor plans. This unfamiliarity directly affects a new recruit's ability to safely enter and exit a building during hazardous fire conditions. The prompt location of city streets and target hazards, proper usage of departmental tools and equipment, and familiarization of fire department culture are a few examples of the special knowledge that needs to be learned by new recruits. The purpose of this study is to identify and provide recommendations for better methods of training new recruits during their two year probationary period in the Euclid Fire Department. The information and findings will be implemented to ensure that training is consistent, realistic, and documented. The measurable effects of not identifying and

implementing better training methods are issues of safety, efficiency, and finance for the Euclid Fire Department. New recruits that do not know how to operate their tools and equipment properly are a danger to themselves, other members of the department, and civilians. It is possible that in a short period of time, these inadequately trained recruits mentor or pass their inadequate skills to other new recruits. Ultimately, the fire department and city could become financially liable in lawsuits for damages or injury incurred to civilians. The fire department and city may also incur financial loss paying for employees on injury leave and workers compensation claims.

The problem of conducting training that is not realistic, consistent, and documented has significance to the Euclid Fire Department. In January 2008, the State of Ohio enacted new rules with regard to firefighter training. Firefighters must now complete a specified number of hours of training in order to maintain certification. This training must also be documented and verifiable to a certain standard. The Euclid Fire Department must now implement new changes to the training of new recruits as well as other department members in order to be compliant with the rules set forth by the State of Ohio.

The improved training will increase the level of safety for the new recruit as well as the safety of his/her fellow firefighters. Recruits will learn how to perform their jobs correctly and safely. The improved training will benefit the community by ensuring that new recruits are familiar with the correct location of city streets and target hazards. Recruits will know where they are responding to and how to deal with situations presented at these special locations.

The problem of having training that is not consistent, realistic, and documented has particular significance to the training officer for the Euclid Fire Department as well. He is directly responsible for the training of the entire department including new recruits. Currently,

the number of training hours completed by the Euclid Fire Department are tabulated and recorded as a whole. A new system is needed to keep track of each individual member of the department. The information and findings from the research of this study may assist other classmates of the Ohio Fire Executive (OFE) course as well as other fire departments in the State of Ohio because these fire departments must also comply with the new rules set forth in January 2008. *The potential impact this study had on the Euclid Fire Department is the realization that there is a need for the Euclid Fire Department to implement a structured training program for new recruits to allow them to perform their work more safely, effectively, and efficiently while conforming to newly enacted state codes and reducing the chances of being found negligent or financially liable for mistakes.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review used in the preparation of this research paper included books, periodicals, journal articles, and literature obtained from the Internet.

Training workers to perform their jobs and developing their skills and abilities are important responsibilities of an organization. Mohr-Keane (1995) suggests discussing some of the benefits of an organization's training program with new employees. The training program gives new employees information on how to do their work the way the organization expects it to be done. It gives new employees a chance to find out whether they are doing their job the way the organization wants it done. Incorrect or inefficient work practices can be changed before the wrong method is taught to someone else (p.81). Also, Mohr-Keane (1995) discusses using the check-back system. This means setting aside time for the new employee to ask questions and time for the supervisor to tell the employee what he or she is doing right and what needs improving or changing.

Rue and Byars (1996) suggest 5 steps for training job skills to new employees. First, prepare the trainee ready to learn. This involves talking to the employee and explaining the importance of the job and why it must be done correctly. Next, the job must be broken down into components and key points identified. The employee can be guided through the entire work cycle without injury to the employee or damage to equipment. Observing and mastering key points help the trainee acquire the needed skill and perform work effectively. The proper way the job is to be performed should be demonstrated to the employee. Tasks should be performed a little at a time with the trainee being allowed to ask questions at anytime. Each component should be fully understood before going to the next step. Then, the trainee should be allowed to perform the work. This should be done under the guidance of a supervisor that will interrupt and

correct any mistakes as needed before moving on. Finally, trainees should be allowed to perform the job on their own.

Brown (2000) stresses the importance of successfully preparing new recruits for their new careers in a fire department. First and foremost, the training officer responsible for training these new recruits must truly desire to be in this position. The training officer should share openly with recruits the reasons why he or she became a firefighter. New recruits should be prepared to follow orders. Brown (2000) states that new recruits are Generation Xers, most of whom have never had to take an order from anyone in their lives. He stresses making sure new recruits understand the nature of directives on the fire scene, autocratic fireground command orders vs. nonemergency type directives. Given that his publication is nearly 10 years old, it can be said that new recruits are now in fact part of Generation Y and Millennials, and even further removed from previous generations that were more used to taking directives and responding to orders. Brown also stresses making sure the new recruits understand the departmental policies on discipline and order and the consequences of failing to follow orders. Another important aspect of preparing new recruits is preparing their families. Brown (2000) suggests removing as much stress as possible that can be induced by a family that is suddenly receiving a lot less of the recruit's attention. He suggests discussing the family factors in detail during the orientation lecture. Also, an open invitation should be given to the family to visit the training site. A family day or two should be hosted during this period.

FEMA (2000) states that a training records and reporting system must document all training and education completed by the individual member of the fire department. Training records should include schedules for all training; daily training records, including instructor, subject and hours; company training; individual training; monthly and yearly summaries; and

certifications results. Signed lesson plans should be kept to verify that the training actually took place (p. SM 2-17).

Having the right individuals in charge of training new recruits is very important. The Marine Corps makes sure that process is handled by some of the most outstanding Marines in the Corps. According to Freedman (2000), the most prestigious slots for Marines of almost any rank—the jobs that are hardest to get and the clearly mark a Marine for a likely rise to the top—are those that involve the core personnel functions including hiring, training, and steering of other Marines (p. 115).

Organizations have several options for training new employees after a general orientation program ends. Sims (2002) explains that a department manager can train employees themselves, select an experienced employee to formally serve in the role, or allow training to take place in a random and possibly inaccurate manner (p. 338). Experienced employees that serve as On-the-Job Trainers need to be carefully selected and competent.

Training programs can be set up in different ways. Strickland (2003) recommends using “certification based training and education.” This training and education focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary for the performances within a given standard, and can test and evaluate them to the standard. Certification training can come in many different forms and methods including the local, state, and national levels. The certification system must be realistic, credible, and must have passed some degree of validity measurement (p.286). Strickland (2003) offers that certifications that meet national criteria are more easily recognized and provide more credibility. Also, these certifications are more easily transferred from one fire department to another. Record keeping is a requirement for fire departments. Training records are mandated by laws and regulations. Strickland (2003) suggests that documentation that needs to be

maintained with training records includes participants' names, lesson plans, competency and performance testing, number of hours of training, and training dates.

Jenaway (2004) discusses how training in the fire service has changed. Years ago, training and education were much simpler. People learned from their elders. The training was primarily hands-on and had little testing, if any. Today's training must involve not only the actual performance of the task, but how to professionally manage the people and process that result in the completion of the job. Training must be cost effective as well. Training must be recorded and evaluations completed to ensure learning has occurred. Jenaway (2004) discusses the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, an organization that has established training and education program requirements and performance indicators that are fundamental to operational programs and organizational purposes. The CFAI defines specific training and competency programs, resources, and capabilities for fire service personnel that support defined operational programs and thereby accomplish organizational purposes. Jenaway (2004) mentions that central to the success of the training process is a learning resources organizational structure and a technically proficient staff. The training staff should provide services that encourage and stimulate competency, innovation and increased effectiveness.

Lang (2005) describes an orientation program called Passport used by Compass Group, a food service company. Passport is marketed as "the first expedition," and is part of a larger training and development initiative called Careers for Life. Passport is divided into 10 "ports of call" that go way beyond basic job training. These ports, or modules, combine on-site and Web-based components that allow both the trainee and management to adapt the training experience to circumstances, including the new employee's experience level and the amount of time available. The program also allows the company to track the orientation process, to see who is completing

it and how the process is going. The additional modules that provide the new hire with potential career development pathways, include online segments on the Compass Way (customer awareness and interaction); Embracing Diversity (not just cultural, but also diversity in skill and interests); Harassment and Workplace Rules; Quality Assurance, including food safety and sanitation; Living Well (how to integrate wellness and balance into one's life); and Work Safety. The final Port of Call, Gaining Additional Skills, goes back to live, on-site cross training, and is the primary career development tool for new hires. The manager must sign off on each Port of Call before the new hire can progress to the next.

The working environment in a fire department differs from that of other organizations. The scene of an emergency can be very stressful and chaotic. However, the fire station, where firefighters await emergency calls, can be just as complicated. Meyers (2005) researched how new firefighters assimilated into fire departments and found that new hires must accept and socialize themselves with the culture of the organization in which they are hired.

Different terms are used to describe how a new employee is introduced to his or her new organization. Lee (2008) uses the term "onboarding" and describes the process as integrating new employees into the organization and preparing them to become fully engaged, productive members of the organization. Lee (2006) also stresses the importance of having an orientation program. This program needs to be interesting and interactive allowing the new employee to express how they are doing.

Arthur (2006) further describes the term onboarding as a program that continues beyond the point at which the orientation programs end. New employees are linked with more colleagues and introduced to other aspects of the organization.

The National Fire Protection Agency, an organization formed in 1896 that promotes safety, publishes the *National Fire Codes* that includes standards fire departments are expected to follow. NFPA 1500 5.1.3 states that the fire department shall establish training and education programs that provide new members initial training, proficiency opportunities, and a method of skill and knowledge evaluation for duties assigned to the member prior to engaging in emergency operations. Furthermore, NFPA 1500 5.1.4 states the fire department shall restrict the activities of new members during emergency operations until the member has demonstrated the skills and abilities to complete the tasks expected. Fire departments are also expected to provide training and education with regards to written procedures.

Network Appliance, a data management company, decided to revamp their new hire training program. Varma (2007) states that the project began with a thorough needs analysis. Network Appliance wanted to create a training program that would build on the skills that employees already had, add a familiarity of company tools, policies, and procedures, and an elevated set of technical and customer service standards. The resulting program is called the Global Services Onramp New Hire Training Program. During the new employee's first week on the job, introductory material about Network Appliance products is delivered through self paced e-learning. The next component has the new employee completing hands-on work in a classroom. This training gives the new hire the opportunity to focus, get their hands on products, and gain perspective on what customers are doing with the company's technologies. The next module is an instructor-led class focusing on soft skills, support center tools, and processes. New hires listen in on live calls with real customers. More hands-on training is received that emphasizes active learning. At the end of each day, the instructor formally debriefs the students, providing them with the best practices they can apply on the job, and coaching them on how to

deal with problems that are similar to those they saw in the lab. During the final weeks of the program, new hires respond to cases that are generated by the company's computerized support system. This helps them make the transition to handle live customer calls. Continual data reviews ensure that the troubleshooting scenarios target the 20 percent of real life situations that account for 80 percent of Network Appliance's cases.

Based on the information obtained in the literature review, several trends were discovered that showed how organizations orient and train newly hired employees. Many successful organizations use a training program that is clearly detailed. In some instances, the content of a training curriculum is provided by recognized professional agencies that use codes, standards, recommended practices and guides. Survey questions were created from information discovered during the literature review. Since organizations are hiring the generation of employees, they must know what to expect from them. Newly hired employees must also know what is expected from them. Having the right individual(s) responsible for the training of new hires is imperative. Training needs to be documented.

PROCEDURES

Research for the applied research paper initially began at the Lakeland Community College Library. Articles were located using the databases OhioLINK Electronic Journal Center and EBSCO. Books were requested and obtained using the OhioLINK inter-library loan feature. Reference books were used from the Euclid Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau as well as books from the Euclid Fire Department library. Reference materials were also obtained from the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

A survey (Appendix 1) was conducted to see how organizations conduct the orientation and training of new employees. The survey was divided into three sections. Each section asked questions pertaining to the three research questions on which this paper is based. The survey was created and conducted electronically using an online service called Survey Monkey. Margie Fusco of the Ohio Fire Chief's Association allowed the survey to be mass e-mailed using the association's distribution lists (Appendix 2). The survey was distributed electronically to fire departments that have OFE students and alumni. Training officers from area departments were contacted via phone and asked them if they would be interested in completing the survey. These fire departments consisted of full-time, part-time, combination, and volunteer staffing. Local non-fire service organizations with various numbers of employees were contacted via phone. The individual responsible for the training of new employees was asked to participate in the survey. These organizations included an association management firm, a sales in manufacturing company, a large insurance company, a carpenter's union, and a full-time police department (Figures 1-2). Each participant completed the survey electronically through a link sent via electronic mail. The results were collected and analyzed with the use of Survey Monkey. Results were collected over a four week period.

24. Which of the following best describes your organization?			Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time career fire department			50.0%	27
Part-time fire department			5.6%	3
Combination full-time/part-time fire department			35.2%	19
Volunteer fire department			0.0%	0
Other than fire department			9.3%	5
		Other (please specify)		7
		<i>answered question</i>		54
		<i>skipped question</i>		5

Figure 1.
Organization Type of Survey Respondents

Note: Total respondents to survey were 59 people. This chart provides an analysis of the fire department or other organization type of each respondent.

25. What is the number of employees in your organization?			Response Percent	Response Count
1-25			5.5%	3
26-50			45.5%	25
51-100			41.8%	23
101-500			3.6%	2
501+			3.6%	2
Not certain			0.0%	0
		<i>answered question</i>		55
		<i>skipped question</i>		4

Figure 2.
Organization Size of Survey Respondents

Limitations of the Study

Limitations that could affect this study include, but not limited to, security software installed on computer systems. Some organizations have computer software that will not accept electronic mail from unknown sources to prevent computer viruses. Additionally, no surveys were received from a 100% volunteer fire department.

Definition of Terms

Platoon. An organized group of firefighters who are assigned to work the same tour of duty. Platoons are designated as A, B, or C and consist of a 24 hour shift beginning at 0830 hours (Euclid Fire Department Communications Glossary, 2006).

Fireground. The operational area at a fire scene (Euclid Fire Department Communications Glossary, 2006).

Onboarding. The process of integrating new employees into the organization and preparing them to become fully engaged, productive members of the organization (Lee, 2008).

Company Officer. The individual in charge of a team of firefighters with apparatus assigned to perform a specific function in a designated response area (Delmar, 2008).

RESULTS

The results of this project were derived from various sources including published books found using the OhioLINK inter-library loan feature. Articles were obtained using the databases OhioLINK Electronic Journal Center and EBSCO. Reference books were used from the Euclid Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau as well as the Euclid Fire Department Library. Reference materials were also obtained from the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

A survey was conducted that asked questions regarding how other organizations orient and train new employees. The survey was created and conducted using an online service called Survey Monkey. The survey was distributed electronically to fire departments that have OFE students and alumni. Local fire departments and local non-fire service organizations were used as well. A total of 59 organizations participated in the survey.

Research Question #1

What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) should be acquired by new recruits during their two year probationary period?

Section one of the electronic survey consisted of seven questions. One item asked how organizations determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities that new trainees/recruits must acquire during the orientation/probation period. Eighty-nine percent of respondents agreed that organizational/departmental policies should determine what is to be acquired. Sixty-two percent of respondents believed that the position description should determine what needs to be acquired (Figure 3).

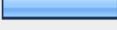
3. How does your organization determine the knowledge, skills, abilities that new trainees/recruits must acquire during the orientation process/probationary period? (check all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Organizational/departmental policies		89.7%	52
Professional guidelines		53.4%	31
Industry standards		43.1%	25
Job analysis		46.6%	27
Position description		62.1%	36
Previous training programs		20.7%	12
Other (please specify)			13
		<i>answered question</i>	58
		<i>skipped question</i>	1

Figure 3.
Determination of KSAs New Recruits Must Acquire During Probation/Orientation

One survey item asked respondents to rate the importance of six topics that pertain to an organization using a 1-to-5 likert scale, 1 being of little importance and 5 being of most importance (Figure 4). Knowledge of tools and equipment as well as learning departmental rules and regulations rated as being most important. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents rated workplace culture a “4.”

4. With regard to categories new hires/recruits should learn during their orientation/probationary period, please rate the importance of the following: (5=high, 1=low)							
	1-Low	2	3-Neutral	4	5-High	Rating Average	Response Count
Knowledge of tools and equipment	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.9% (10)	83.1% (49)	4.83	59
Workplace culture	0.0% (0)	6.8% (4)	18.6% (11)	39.0% (23)	35.6% (21)	4.03	59
Departmental rules and regulations	0.0% (0)	1.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	33.9% (20)	64.4% (38)	4.61	59
Knowledge of organizational chart/heirarchy	0.0% (0)	5.1% (3)	18.6% (11)	49.2% (29)	27.1% (16)	3.98	59
Company/Organizational history	1.7% (1)	13.6% (8)	44.1% (26)	27.1% (16)	13.6% (8)	3.37	59
Communication skills written/oral	3.4% (2)	5.1% (3)	10.2% (6)	42.4% (25)	39.0% (23)	4.08	59
	<i>answered question</i>						59
	<i>skipped question</i>						0

Figure 4.
Importance of Various Categories of Knowledge for New Hires

Another survey question asked how frequently an organization evaluates its own standards for evaluating the skills that a new hire must possess. Forty percent of the respondents' organizations evaluate their standards on a yearly basis. Eighteen percent of the respondents' organizations do not evaluate their standards at all (Figure 5).

6. How often does your organization evaluate its own standards for the skills that new hires must possess?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Monthly or more often		6.8%	4
Not sure		13.6%	8
Quarterly		10.2%	6
Semi-annually		10.2%	6
Annually		40.7%	24
Does not evaluate		18.6%	11
		<i>answered question</i>	59
		<i>skipped question</i>	0

Figure 5.
Frequency of Evaluation of Training Standards

Research Question #2

What types of training techniques are available and which ones could be adopted by the Euclid Fire Department?

An item in the second section of the survey asked which training techniques are currently used to train new employees. Nearly all respondents' organizations use some form of in-service or hands on training. Respondents added comments that stressed the importance of supervised hands on training followed with proficiency testing. Sixty percent of respondents' organizations use some form of proficiency testing (Figure 6).

8. Which of the following training techniques does your organization currently use?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
In-service		92.9%	52
Proficiency tests		60.7%	34
Expert lectures		32.1%	18
Small group interaction		69.6%	39
Hands-on-Training		92.9%	52
Observation		48.2%	27
	Other (please specify)		1
	answered question		56
	skipped question		3

Figure 6.
Training Techniques Currently in Use

Research Question #3

How do other fire departments and organizations document training of new employees?

Section three of the survey consisted of 12 questions. Question one revealed that ninety-four percent of the respondents' organizations document the progress of new hires (Figure 7). Eighty percent of the respondents' organizations use on-the-job evaluations or performance check sheets to document the training of new employees (Figure 8). In many instances, respondents noted that documentation is kept in a recruit training manual. The manuals are kept with the new recruit's personnel files so a record is maintained on exactly what curriculum was taught, how the curriculum was taught, and who was responsible for providing the training.

14. Does your department document the progress of new hires?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			94.5%	52
No			5.5%	3
			<i>answered question</i>	55
			<i>skipped question</i>	4

Figure 7.
Documentation of New Hire Progress

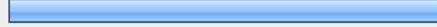
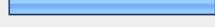
15. If "yes" to question #1, how is documentation recorded?			Response Percent	Response Count
On-the-Job evaluations			82.7%	43
Performance check sheets			80.8%	42
Personal interview			26.9%	14
Formal testing			38.5%	20
			Other (please specify)	0
			<i>answered question</i>	52
			<i>skipped question</i>	7

Figure 8.
Methods of Documentation of New Hire Progress

One survey item asked the frequency at which a new hire's progress is documented. Nearly forty percent of the respondents reported that their organizations document the progress of a newly hired employee on a daily basis (Figure 9). Because most fire departments work a 24

hour shift followed by 48 hours off, many of the new recruits were evaluated at the end of their shift as opposed to a daily eight hour shift.

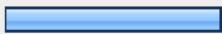
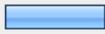
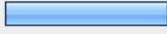
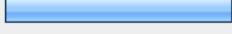
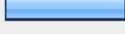
17. How often does your organization/department document the progress of a new hire? (check all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Daily		39.2%	20
Weekly		17.6%	9
Monthly		29.4%	15
Quarterly		41.2%	21
Yearly		21.6%	11
		Other (please specify)	9
		<i>answered question</i>	51
		<i>skipped question</i>	8

Figure 9.
Frequency of New Hire Progress Documentation

Another survey item asked who was responsible for documenting the progress of a new hire. Sixty-five percent of the respondents' organizations reported that the company officer was responsible for documenting the progress of a new hire/recruit. The company officer is an individual in charge of a team of firefighters with apparatus assigned to perform a specific function in a designated response area. Thirty-six percent of the respondents' organizations utilized an assigned coach or mentor to document the progress of a new hire/recruit. A survey question also asked if new hires/recruits had a means to track his or her progress. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents' organizations provided some means for the individual to track his or her progress. A recruit training manual was utilized sixty-eight percent of the time. Evaluations were used fifty-four percent of the time.

Another survey item asked if a new hire/recruit was able to provide feedback regarding his or her orientation and training process with their supervisor. Eighty-three percent of the respondents' organizations provide a means for the new hire/recruit to provide feedback. New hires/recruits were able to communicate directly with their supervisor or assigned mentor via meetings both scheduled and unscheduled. They were also encouraged to write comments on evaluations. Electronic mail was also used as a means to communicate.

DISCUSSION

The research for this project was initiated to discover methods for training new recruits in the Euclid Fire Department. Since the Euclid Fire Department does not have a formal program, research was conducted to see what other organizations are doing both fire service and non-fire service related. The results of the survey distributed to various organizations showed that eighty-nine percent of the respondent's organizations use organizational/departmental policies to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a new hire/recruit should acquire during their orientation/probationary period. More than fifty percent use professional guidelines. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA, 2007,5.1.4) states "the fire department shall establish training and education programs that provide new members initial training, proficiency opportunities, and a method of skill and knowledge evaluation for duties assigned to them member prior to engaging in emergency operations." This is an area in which the Euclid Fire Department is seriously lacking.

With the survey utilizing a likert scale of 1-to-5, 1 being low importance and 5 being most important, eighty-three percent of the respondents rated knowledge of tools and equipment a 5. Sixty-four percent rated the understanding of departmental rules a 5. It would seem that these are very important items to be included in training program for new recruits. By incorporating these items into a training program specifically for new recruits in the Euclid Fire Department, a clearer image of what is expected from the new recruit could be created. The training program gives new employees information on how to do their work the way the organization expects it to be done (Mohr-Keane, 1995).

Results of the survey indicated that forty percent of the respondents' organizations review and evaluate the standards for the skills that a new hire/recruit must possess on an annual basis.

The Euclid Fire Department is one of the organizations that does not evaluate its standards at all, mostly due to the fact it does not have a training program. Strickland (2003) recommends using “certification based training and education.” The training focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary for the performances within a given standard, and can test and evaluate them to the standard. Russell J. Strickland (Strickland, 2003, p. 286) states, “The certification must be realistic, credible, and must have passed some degree of validity measurement.”

The results of the survey indicated that ninety-two percent of the respondents’ organizations utilized in-service or hands-on-training as a training technique for new hires. Two additional key points with regards to hands-on-training were discovered in literature review. First, the trainee must be prepared to learn. This involves talking to the employee and explaining the importance of the job and why it must be done correctly (Rue and Byars, 1996). Secondly, having the right individuals in charge of training new recruits is very important. The Marine Corps makes sure that process is handled by some of the most outstanding Marines (Freedman, 2000).

Results from the survey indicated that fifty-seven percent of the respondents’ organizations utilize technology specifically, computers to train new hires. Cost may be a consideration as to why more organizations are not using computers. However, at Network Appliance, during, the new employee’s first week on the job, introductory material about the company is delivered through self paced e-learning (Varma, 2007). Hands on training would seem to be more beneficial for new recruit firefighters as they will be using many of the tools and equipment they train with for real life emergencies. In the survey, an open ended question was asked regarding what training tools would an organization purchase and implement if the

organization had unlimited financial resources. The majority of the respondents requested items that involve computers and simulators involving advanced technology.

A question was asked in the survey whether or not the department documents the progress of new hires. Ninety-four percent of the respondents' organizations document the progress of new hires. Again, this is an area where the Euclid Fire Department falls short. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA,2000) states, "A training records and reporting system must document all training and education completed by the individual member of the fire department." The Euclid Fire Department does maintain records for all members, however, essential items are not included in the record. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, 2000) states, "Training records should include schedules for all training; daily training records, including instructor, subject and hours; company training; individual training; monthly and yearly summaries; and certifications results. Signed lesson plans should be kept to verify that the training actually took place." Furthermore, Dr. William Jenaway (Jenaway, 2004) states, "Training must be recorded and evaluations completed to ensure learning has occurred."

Results from the literature review and the survey clearly indicate that training needs to be documented. A survey question was asked as to how departments document training. Eighty percent of the respondents' organizations use on-the-job evaluations or performance check sheets as a means of documenting training. Due to large amount of training many departments require their new hires to complete, evaluations and check sheets are often kept in a separate manual.

Forty percent of the respondents' organizations document the training of their new employees on a daily basis. Daily documentation of a new employee's progress could keep and individual from falling behind and if feedback is constantly provided, the new employee can correct deficiencies. But who is responsible for documenting the training of new employees?

Sixty-five percent of the respondent's organizations require the company officer to document the training. This high number most likely reflects the fact that ninety-one percent of the participating organizations are fire service related. Thirty-six percent of the respondent's organizations assign a coach/mentor to assist with the new hire/recruit training process. This would be beneficial for instances when the company officer is off duty. Doris Sims (Sims, 2002) states, "A department manager can train employees themselves, select an experienced employee to formally serve in the role, or allow training to take place in a random and possibly inaccurate manner." Experienced employees that serve as on-the-job trainers need to be carefully selected and competent (Sims, 2002). Having a team of competent and willing individuals that serve the role of coach or mentor for a new hire/recruit could be very beneficial for the department as well as the new hire/recruit.

In the survey, a question was asked regarding whether or not there is a method for a new hire/recruit to provide feedback about the training they are receiving. Eighty-three percent of the respondents' organizations provide means to provide feedback mostly through the comment sections on evaluations. Having evaluations conducted on a daily basis and allowing the new hire/recruit to provide daily feedback could be a tremendous asset for both the trainer and the trainee.

Organizational Implications

The Euclid Fire Department must establish a training program that ensures that all newly hired recruits receive training during their orientation and probationary period that is consistent, realistic, and documented. Based on information obtained in the literature review, there is a high probability that the Euclid Fire Department could be held financially liable for injuries and

property damage resulting from inadequate training. Federal monies may be forfeited due noncompliance of federal standards and codes.

According to the survey, area fire departments as well as non-fire service related organizations have an established training program for newly hired employees. The Euclid Fire Department is lacking such a program and should establish a program that enables its new recruits to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform their jobs safely, effectively, and efficiently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Euclid Fire Department does not have an established means of providing training to new recruits that is consistent, realistic, and documented. Research indicates that several implementations and changes could be made to improve the methods of training new recruits in the Euclid Fire Department during their two year probationary period.

Recommendation #1

The training officer establishes a formal program that begins with all new recruits being placed on a 40 hour work week for two weeks. During this period, all official paperwork is completed and recruits are presented with a recruit training manual that will serve as their main reference for training to be completed during their two year probationary period. Recruits will begin each day with a Pledge of Allegiance and check to see if the United States flag needs to be raised. Recruits will be introduced to all personnel on all shifts and at all stations. Recruits will spend time with the fire prevention bureau, dispatch office, and complete ride-alongs with the police department. Equipment and gear will be issued at this time. An overview of the history of the Euclid Fire Department should be presented with material that can be taken home to share with family members.

Recommendation #2

Establish a recruit training manual. The manual shall contain personnel, operational, and procedural information needed to assist the recruit during the probationary period. The manual will consist of sections including the following: orientation checklists, job skill sheets, training evaluation sheets, apparatus/vehicle inventory, streets/maps, and departmental forms. All sheets will describe the activity that was completed, date, evaluator's name, and recruit's name. The manual shall be set up so that certain requirements are completed within certain time frames.

Qualified mentors/coaches will be assigned to assist with the completion of the manual. If possible, the manual may be converted so that it could be completed electronically on a computer. The completed manual will serve as a departmental record of completed training and kept on file.

Recommendation #3

A mentor/coach program should be established. Criteria will need to be established as to the qualifications required for serving as a mentor or coach. The first requirement should be that the fire department member actually wants to participate in the program. Length of time on the job, certified instructor status, or a minimum score on a recent promotional exam could be some of the criteria. Once this pool of mentors is established, the new recruits will have additional resources to assist with training and completion of the training manual. The new recruit's company officer should be initially responsible for ensuring training is completed according to program guidelines. A status report should be completed by the company officer at the end of each shift. The new recruit should have an opportunity to provide any comments or feelings at the end of each shift. All correspondence and reports should be forwarded to the training officer.

Recommendation #4

Establish a means to re-evaluate the new recruit training program. Any comments the new recruit has made on skill sheets or evaluations needs to be considered. At the end of each established timeline, the new recruit should be asked to write down or share his or her thoughts regarding the training they have received. Upon completion of the probationary period, the new recruit should provide a written report summarizing the training experience and including any suggestions for improvement. The training officer should evaluate the program on an annual basis even when there are no recruits actively participating in the program. Neighboring fire

departments can be contacted to see what new techniques they are using. Seminars and classes can be attended for new and improved ideas.

Recommendations for Future Readers

Future readers could continue this research to examine how effectively trained new recruit firefighters are when they become fully engaged members of a crew. Budgetary issues may affect the quality of training a new recruit receives. The changing dynamics of the workforce could affect how the message the instructor is trying to send is perceived by the new recruit. The fire service must be ready and willing to adapt to change.

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APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey results were gathered using the online tool Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). Below is an example of the user interface each respondent used to complete the survey.

1. Section 1

1. How does your organization/department establish and diagnose the new hire/recruit's knowledge, skills, and abilities before they begin work on day one? (check all that apply)

- References
- Job Experience
- Education
- Prior Training/Certifications

Other (please specify)

2. Of the tactics mentioned in question 1, which do you feel is most accurate in the diagnosis of a new hire's potential? Why?

3. How does your organization determine the knowledge, skills, abilities that new trainees/recruits must acquire during the orientation process/probationary period? (check all that apply)

- Organizational/departmental policies
- Professional guidelines
- Industry standards
- Job analysis
- Position description
- Previous training programs

Other (please specify)

4. With regard to categories new hires/recruits should learn during their orientation/probationary period, please rate the importance of the following: (5=high, 1=low)

	1-Low	2	3-Neutral	4	5-High
Knowledge of tools and equipment	<input type="radio"/>				
Workplace culture	<input type="radio"/>				
Departmental rules and regulations	<input type="radio"/>				
Knowledge of organizational chart/hierarchy	<input type="radio"/>				
Company/Organizational history	<input type="radio"/>				
Communication skills written/oral	<input type="radio"/>				

5. How does your organization evaluate the progress made by a new hire in acquiring new knowledge, skills, and abilities during the probationary period of employment?

- Job performance/supervisor ratings
- Job performance testing
- On-the-job training checklists

Other (please specify)

6. How often does your organization evaluate its own standards for the skills that new hires must possess?

- Monthly or more often
- Not sure
- Quarterly
- Semi-annually
- Annually
- Does not evaluate

7. Which personnel/departments are involved in this process of evaluating new hires/recruits?

- Human resources
 Training
 Supervisors
 Administrators
 Outside consultants

Other (please specify)

2. Section 2**1. Which of the following training techniques does your organization currently use?**

- In-service
 Proficiency tests
 Expert lectures
 Small group interaction
 Hands-on-Training
 Observation

Other (please specify)

2. Of the training techniques used by your organization, which do you feel is most effective for the orientation of new hires? Why?**3. Of the training techniques used by your organization, which do you feel is most effective for ongoing training of veteran employees? Why?**

4. Does your organization utilize technology (specifically, computers) to train new hires?

Yes

No

If yes, how is this technology used in training?

5. Please comment on the level to which your trainers have license to personalize training materials. How much are they expected to "stick to the book"? How much are they able to prepare and use training techniques of their own?

6. What training tool(s) would you purchase and implement for your organization if unlimited resources (i.e. money, personnel, etc.) were available?

3. Section 3

1. Does your department document the progress of new hires?

Yes

No

2. If "yes" to question #1, how is documentation recorded?

On-the-Job evaluations

Performance check sheets

Personal interview

Formal testing

Other (please specify)

3. What record-keeping processes does your organization use to document the progress of a new hire?

- Special software application
- Electronic spreadsheet (e.g. Microsoft Excel)
- Electronic notes (e.g. Microsoft Word)
- Handwritten log

Other (please specify)

4. How often does your organization/department document the progress of a new hire? (check all that apply)

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly

Other (please specify)

5. Who in your organization is responsible for documenting the progress of a new hire?

- Field Training Officer
- Company Officer
- Assigned coach/mentor
- Direct supervisor
- Human resources representative
- The employee him/herself
- None

Other (please specify)

6. Does the new hire have a means with which to track his/her own progress?

- Yes
- No

7. If "yes" to question #6, how does a new hire track his/her progress?

- Assigned manual
- Computer program
- Evaluations
- Generated reports given to trainee/recruit
- No method available

Other (please specify)

8. Is the new trainee/recruit given visibility to his/her progress reporting maintained by the organization?

- Yes
- No

9. Is there a method for a new trainee/recruit to provide feedback about the training they are receiving?

- Yes
- No

10. How is an employee able to share feedback regarding his/her training and orientation process with supervisors?

11. Which of the following best describes your organization?

- Full-time career fire department
- Part-time fire department
- Combination full-time/part-time fire department
- Volunteer fire department
- Other than fire department

Other (please specify)

12. What is the number of employees in your organization?

- 1-25
- 26-50
- 51-100
- 101-500
- 501+
- Not certain

APPENDIX 2 – E-MAIL COMMUNICATION SENT TO POTENTIAL RESPONDENTS

OFE Students and Alumni –

I am asking for your help with a survey, titled “New Hire Orientation Process Survey,” that will be used to enhance my research project, “Methods for Training New Recruits in the Euclid Fire Department.”

The survey is divided into three sections and should take only a few minutes to complete. Here is the link (Press Ctrl and left click):

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=NTG_2bo2S5ubK58sewqDfTLw_3d_3d

Thank you in advance for your participation.

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